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SUBJECT: RAMSEY CLARK AND HUMAN RIGHTS TEAM VISIT NANDIGRAM,
CRITICIZE GOWB

REF: KOLKATA 345, 351

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On November 30, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark led a three-member delegation to visit villages in West Bengal's Nandigram district. Clark and his team came for an on-the-spot assessment of human rights violations by Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPM) activists and West Bengal's police force. The W. Bengal government provided security and support to the delegation, despite fostering the violence in Nandigram in an effort to deflect criticism. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On November 30, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, activist and Central Secretariat member of U.S.-based Workers' World Party Sarah Flounders, and Vice-president of the U.S. Steel Workers Association Steven Kirschbaum visited Nandigram on a fact-finding mission. Their visit to W. Bengal included speaking at a seminar organized by the Anti-Imperialist Forum in Kolkata on November 30. The seminar is an annual event sponsored by the Socialist Unity Center of India (SUCI). SUCI had invited Clark and his International Action Center to take part at the seminar. The trio also held a press conference at the Kolkata Press Club.

¶3. (U) Clark and his team visited Gokulnagar, Sonachura, Adhikaripara, Maheshpur and Satengabari villages in the Nandigram district. People in these villages have born the brunt of the violent attacks by armed cadres of the CPM since January 2007 (reftels). Clark's delegation also went to a relief camp housed in a local high school and spoke to the occupants who are members of the Bhumi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee (BUPC) that led the movement against acquisition of farm land in Nandigram.

¶4. (U) After visiting the villages, Clark criticized the W. Bengal government for "perpetrating atrocities" on the people of Nandigram as part of its industrialization drive, saying, "We have come here from the U.S. to get a first-hand report about the exploitation in this part of the country. We can understand your sufferings at the hands of the attackers and the police. What is happening here is common throughout the world. It is a government serving the rich at the cost of poor."

¶5. (U) Human rights activists from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also accompanied Clark during his Nandigram visit. The W. Bengal government escorted Clark and his entourage and provided security. Contacts told post that the Anti-Imperialist Forum was backed by many of India's Left groups.

¶6. (U) COMMENT: A human rights activist accompanying Clark was surprised by the support provided by W. Bengal government for the tour. She attributed this to the state government and CPM leadership seeking to manage and minimize the outside scrutiny. Preventing Clark's visit could have brought Nandigram back into

international focus, and could have aggravated schisms that appeared over Nandigram between the CPM and its Left allies. By supporting his visit, the CPM and the GOWB are trying to close the chapter on the violence and reinforce a "back-to-business" image for W. Bengal.

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